

SEMINAR XXI: MIT SEMINAR ON FOREIGN  
POLITICS AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST  
INTO THE XXI CENTURY

This proposal is for support of a course for future decisionmakers of American defense and security policy to explore the importance of different models of state-society relations in interpreting the actions of key international actors. Taking cases of direct US-Soviet confrontation, cases of conflict in the developing countries, and problems common to both the US and the Soviet Union, the course will examine the different interpretations that flow from different frameworks of understanding -- liberal/neoclassical; Marxist; sociological. This initial proposal is for a one-year experimental course.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

We propose to begin a long-term educational effort first, to expose our future national security leadership to the broader aspects and characteristics of societies that are or may become our adversaries and allies; and, second to examine critically our own domestic and international policies and strategies in a variety of possible future circumstances.

The importance of such an educational endeavor should be obvious. When one's principal adversary is weak, his capabilities not his intentions are of paramount importance. But, as an adversary's capabilities draw closer to your own, his intentions for using his enhanced capability become increasingly central to any strategy one might think of implementing successfully. The Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu long ago counseled:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

We believe that we have failed to understand our adversaries and the societies and cultures in which their specific intentions are formed -- and we fear the consequences of our ignorance. The program of study we propose attempts to address the shortfalls in "what we know" about the actors and the environment, for which we develop national security policy objectives and devise strategies.

With respect to our primary politico-military adversary, the Soviet Union, Churchill in an October 1, 1939 radio address characterized the Russians as "a riddle wrapped in a mystery



Central Intelligence Agency  
Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

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NOTE TO: D/MPS

SUBJECT: DoD Course

DoD has invited us to send an officer to a course they are sponsoring. The course is aimed at military line officers who are expected to reach the senior commander level. Candidates include officers ranging from Lieutenant Colonel to Major General level.

See if we can find a candidate. Although the course is focused heavily on "knowing the Soviets," I think our best candidates would come from non-Soviet areas.

[redacted] In any case, let us see if we can find someone who can benefit from the course as well as from contacts with a variety of potential senior officers. I would like to have a name in about a week.

[redacted]  
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inside an enigma," a description we still cite today. But, Churchill made another point, long ignored -- he went on to say "... an enigma, but perhaps there is a key. That key is the Russian national interest." The program proposed seeks to use that key to enlarge our understanding of the Soviet state and all other states that are allies and adversaries. We seek to provide participants with modes of analysis that will enable them to explore how different societies identify and act on conceptions of "national interest."

Today, it is a common view that ideology is dying, not only in the West but also among the people and leadership in the Soviet Union. Political commentators opine that now and in the future the Soviet leadership, in increasingly difficult economic circumstances, will resort to the comparatively benign "goulash communism" practiced in Hungary, implying that the Russians will turn to a more pragmatic or non-ideological point of view of politics, economics, and war. We think that judgment is at least misleading if not incorrect. Such a point of view may assume a naive and rigid quality to Marxism-Leninism which underestimates its demonstrated flexibility. Even more important, such a position conceives ideology far too narrowly, associating it with a given system of doctrines and beliefs. If, instead, ideology is understood as a set of cultural and political categories, orientations, and understandings of how the world works and how it should be directed, then it is clear that the ideologies of different societies, adversaries and friends, are integral parts of their national existence. To deal with these societies, we must see their ideologies not as meaningless rhetoric, but as the real lenses through which a country defines national interests. Even a Soviet military officer, who might profess to be cynical about the Leninist ideology, has internalized the Leninist message, and resorts reflexively to those modes of thought for military, political, and economic analysis.

#### DESIGN OF THE SEMINAR

We propose a seminar for selected government and industry participants that will present basic paradigms of state-society-economy relations. We plan to take several foreign policy areas of concern to the United States and to examine how the interpretation of these events is influenced by the paradigm within which it is interpreted.

The seminar will proceed by examination of a series of country cases. In each case, a common set of questions will motivate the analysis of heterogeneous types of evidence and different arguments about social change and political futures. In each country case we shall ask:

What are the alternative ways of specifying the factors that work to maintain political and social stability in this society?

What are the alternative ways of interpreting the forces and conflicts that create pressure for change; for each interpretation, what kinds of change are possible, likely or inconceivable?

Within the frame of different conceptions of the factors working to preserve stability or to bring about change, how can we understand the scope for interventions, from within or without, that would make desirable outcomes more likely?

In considering each of these clusters of issues, we shall return to three basic paradigms of state-society relations: (1) a liberal, neoclassical paradigm; (2) a Marxist paradigm; and (3) a sociological paradigm. The purpose of conducting the seminar in this fashion is two-fold: first, to demonstrate that all systematic and coherent explanations of social and political behavior derive from a few limited types of explanation. While the three that we shall explore are not exhaustive (psychological theories, for example, are omitted), still liberal/neoclassical, Marxist, and sociological models have generated most of the standard explanations of how politics, economy, and society are linked in different countries.

The first objective is to show the systematic connections among variables in different types of explanation; hence, to explore the limits and constraints of each paradigm. The second objective is to enlarge the range of possibilities available to decisionmakers by presenting them with alternative modes of interpreting social, economic, and political data. When policymakers and analysts are able to conceive and evaluate fundamentally different interpretations of the facts at hand, they acquire a kind of leverage on their own biases that makes innovation possible. The same "evidence," viewed through the lens of a different theory, may point to different conclusions than are suggested by one's initial perspective. Hence, new options may become visible. Which of the constraints on achieving our ends are the products of "unhappy" facts, unbending social constancies, or the "laws of economics," which are simply the product of our own limited imaginations and experiences: this is the recurrent question the participants will confront in the materials presented in the seminar.

For the seminar participants, the technique chosen for exploring these issues are country cases. We intend to present

them in three sequences. The seminar will begin (in its initial day-and-a-half session) with the case of the Soviet Union. The first presentations will lay out for the participants the alternative theories of Soviet political behavior. The seminar instructors will demonstrate how each coherent explanation of Soviet behavior provides a different account of how and why the Soviets behave and think as they do; of what the sources of strength and of weakness in the Soviet Union are; of what the sources of stability and of change are; of how the system responds to changes within its own domestic environment and in the international environment; and of which U.S. policy options are most likely to produce positive outcomes. The initial sessions will conclude with a discussion of the basic state-society-economy paradigms from which the various standard explanations of Soviet politics derive.

The second sequence of sessions will focus on countries that constitute current or potential acute concerns for American foreign policy; for example, the Philippines, Nicaragua, Mexico, Iran, South Africa, West European allies. Here the emphasis will no longer be, as in the second sequence, on how the U.S. or the USSR understand what is going on, but rather on different ways of interpreting the evidence of contemporary social, economic, and political change and continuity. Here again the organizing themes of the sessions will be provided by the basic three political-economic paradigms.

Finally, the third sequence of sessions will consider problems that both the USSR and the USA confront and will analyze the characteristic features of the different perspectives from which the two countries approach problems. Among the topics to be considered are arms control, relations with the underdeveloped world, trade, and third-party conflicts. The focus will be on the strengths and weaknesses of the alternative conceptions which the USA and the USSR bring to bear in identifying problems and developing policies.

#### SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The people we will seek as course participants are those well-placed men and women who show interest and aptitude in the policy arena and are already by luck or skill in some highly leveraged position --like military officers in Department of State/Politico-Military Affairs or Policy Planning Branch, the NSC staff, or on the staff of the National Intelligence Council/CIA. We are not intending to limit it to military officers -- indeed there should be civilians from State, ACDA, Commerce, Energy, Treasury, etc. Industry has a place at this

table for we should recognize that industry representatives can make valuable contributions to the "what" and "how" of DOD business.

A breakdown of the 30-40 seminar participants would be something approximating the following: 20-25 military at the Lieutenant Colonel to Brigadier General (O-5/O-7) range; 5-10 non-DOD government; 10 industry representatives.

We think the service chiefs are the appropriate place to begin in developing a slate of candidates from the military services. We intend to ask that each service -- Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, as well as the OJCS -- nominate up to ten officers for attendance. Similar approaches to cognizant officials in State, Treasury, Commerce, the Central Intelligence Agency would be made. We believe that we can develop 40-60 desirable candidates for the 30-40 available seminar positions.

#### SELECTION OF SEMINAR LEADERS

The seminar leaders will be country specialists who will organize their presentations around the major theoretical objectives of the seminar. Since the objectives of the course are not to transmit country expertise, but rather to use this expertise as grist for the mill; i.e., to gain a larger understanding of how different societies work and change, the organizers will choose specialists who are willing for the purposes of this experimental program to design presentations in the modes suggested.

#### PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The MIT Center for International Studies will administer the program. Professor Suzanne Berger, Ford Professor of Political Science, will be the Principal Investigator.

In order to encourage full participation by all participants, the sessions will be held in the Washington, D.C., area. The preliminary plan is to hold the opening and closing sessions at a conference center like Wye Plantation and to hold the monthly seminars in the District itself.

The seminar in its first experimental form is tentatively set to hold its first session in September 1986 and to continue through May 1987. The attached outline shows the preliminary schedule. To allow for adequate detailed planning and follow-up, we propose that the term of the project itself be January 1, 1986 - August 30, 1987.

SCHEDULE\*

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>SPEAKERS</u>
		<b>WHAT'S GOING ON THERE?</b>	<b>TO BE DETERMINED</b>
12-14 September 1986 Fri., 6:00 pm thru Sun., 3:00 pm	Wye Plantation	USSR: Three Paradigms (State, Society, Economy)	
6 October 1986 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	South Africa	
3 November 1986 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	Iran: Religious Fundamentalism	
8 December 1986 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	Central America	
5 January 1987 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	China	
2 February 1987 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	India	
2 March 1987 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	NATO	
		<b>HOW DO WE SEE IT? HOW DO THEY SEE IT?</b>	
6 April 1987 Mon., 6:00-10:00 pm	Bacon House or Carnegie	Arms Negotiations	
9-11 May 1987 OR 16-18 May 1987 (TBD) Fri., 6:00 pm thru Sun., 3:00 pm	Wye Planatation	Trade and Technology	

\*Schedule/precise topics are not firm, and are provided for illustrative purposes only.